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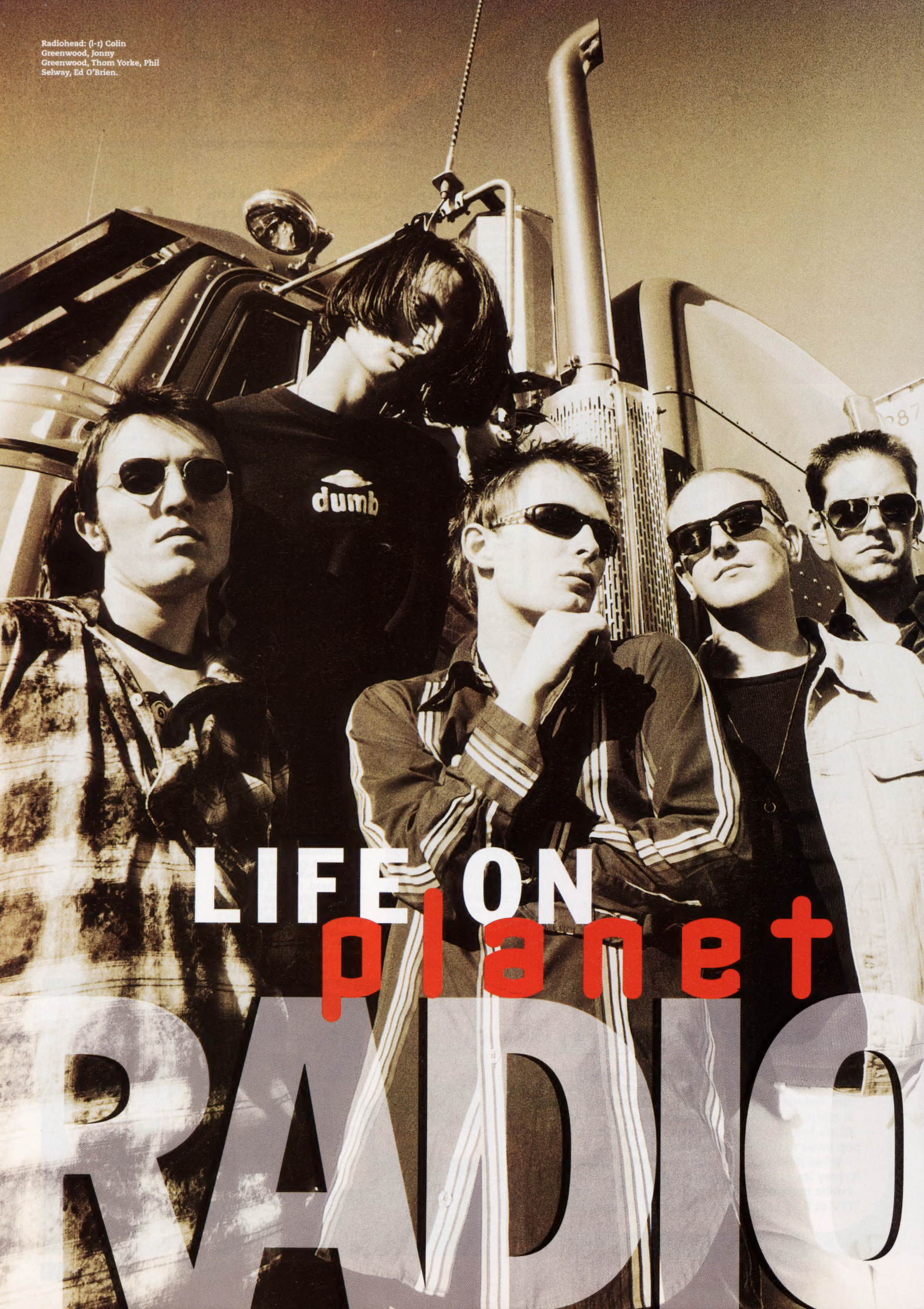
INSIDE PLANET RADIOHEAD
FLUFFY DUBSTAR STRANGE GREEN FOAM! WELLER ASH RYDER MUG SHOTS



Radiohead: (l-r) Colin Greenwood, Jonny Greenwood, Thom Yorke, Phil Selway, Ed O'Brien.

LIFE ON planet RADIO

Muscle grafts. 'Kumbaya'. A half-eaten pork pie. The Israeli Top Ten. A song called 'Your Wind In My Hair'. And simulating the Can-Can. All these things matter on planet Radiohead, a bizarre parallel universe inhabited by five musicians from Oxford, where classroom guitar fumblings lead not to oblivion but to the door marked 'Global Domination'. Confused? Let Clark Collis explain...

"This is it. I'm sure this is the way. Just around the corner and... Oh bugger."
We're backstage at the Southampton Guildhall late in the evening of November 7 last year and Radiohead bass player Colin Greenwood is having what he admits is "a very Spinal Tap moment." Somewhere in the building's cavernous basement a party is taking place to celebrate the successful conclusion of Radiohead's latest UK tour. There will be alcohol. There will be music. There will be celebrities (well, Roger Taylor from Queen anyway). Now all Colin has to do is find the damn place...

The night had been going so well up to this point too. Some light dinner followed a quick spell on the information highway via one of the band's several lap-top computers. Then there was the gig itself. A capacity crowd crawling the walls as Radiohead ploughed through material both new and old. They've always been tight but the last year on the road has seen them climb new heights with 'Creep', 'Fake Plastic Trees' and a weird, pounding 'Planet Telex' all melding together perfectly into a set now stretching out towards the two-hour mark. By the time they encored with a slyly operatic version of Bond theme 'Nobody Does It Better' the capacity crowd were almost too knackered to yell the place down demanding more. Almost.

That was then, however, and this is now. And now involves facing a sturdy but decidedly un-party-like fire-door at the end of yet another indistinguishable corridor. Colin thinks this could be it. He's pretty definite. The portal to Party Central. Booze Bonanza. The bassist pushes down the door's thick metal bar.

"You know, people are always saying that we're like U2," says Colin as we gaze out at a vista that even the most extravagant of estate agents would have to describe as 'some old car park'. "But I'm sure this never fucking happens to Adam Clayton."

It's around 1981 and it takes the adolescent Thom Yorke about five seconds to realise that his new school is not going to be much fun. It's very big on (a) preparing you for a career in accountancy, (b) rowing and (c) kicking the shit out of anyone who objects to (a) or (b). Go figure.

This is the last thing Thom needs. Not that life has exactly been peaches'n'cream up to this point anyway. Thom was born with a paralysed left eye which, at first, the doctors thought would be a permanent condition. Then one day a specialist suggested that maybe a muscle graft might sort things out. The result was that Thom had five major operations before he was six years old. His vision improved but Thom had to wear a patch for a year.

And now this. An all-boys school just outside Oxford. At least Thom has a dream that doesn't involve chartered accountancy. On his eighth birthday he gets a Spanish guitar. From that point on Thom knows what he wants. He wants to be a pop star. So what if all he can play is 'Kumbaya'? He can learn. All

HEAD

he needs is the right people to help.

Colin Greenwood is in the same year as Thom and, if anything, looks even thinner and sicker. They go to the same parties. Thom in heavy-duty mascara. Colin in a full, black bodystocking. They don't go to pick up girls or get hammered. They go to take over the stereo system. Play a little Joy Division. A little Magazine. See how people liked them apples. One day Thom discovers that Colin plays the bass. That's two.

Ed O'Brien is a different kettle of fish altogether. Enormously tall Ed actually looks a bit like Morrissey – if you squint – but he does play the guitar. That's three. All they need now is a drummer. The only suitable candidate, a guy called Phil Selway, is a couple of years older than them. And when you're at school a couple of years is everything. In fact, it's some of Phil's contemporaries who are throwing Colin and Thom downstairs to see if they bounce. Still, Phil seems like a nice guy. It's worth a shot... And suddenly there are four.

Well, five actually. Colin's younger brother, Jonny, is some kind of shit hot viola player. Unfortunately, there isn't much room for a viola in Oxford's newest post-punk pop band. Still, Jonny is very keen, and is told he can play harmonica.

They rehearse every Friday. In fact that's how they get their first name. On A Friday. OK, so it's not great. But no one can think of anything better. Predictably, few of their parents are keen. Thom has to say that he's staying at a friend's house when they start doing gigs. One day, the headmaster bans all electronic music from school. Bugger him. Bugger them all!

Then... school's out! Leaving Jonny behind they all go off to college in the autumn of 1987. Thom shoots off to Exeter University to do Fine Art and Literature. He starts to mess around with samplers and plays guitar with local techno outfit Flickernoise. Phil and Ed are at Liverpool. Phil plays drums with a theatre production of *Return To The Forbidden Planet*. But he's thinking about packing the sticks away. Maybe getting a job in publishing. Colin has become Entertainment Officer at Peterhouse College in Cambridge. It isn't so bad. He plays in a few bands. In his final year he's put in charge of booking bands for the Peterhouse Ball. He books Humphrey Littleton. He books the James Taylor Quartet. He books himself three times.

Somehow the band continues to rehearse during the holidays. They play some gigs. The Jericho Tavern in Oxford. London's Rock Garden. No one knows who the hell they are but it's still cool. Jonny switches from harmonica to guitar. In a couple of months he's caught up with Thom and Ed. By the time everyone has left college he's in a different league altogether.

1991. Time to get serious. They change their name to Radiohead and move into a house together in Oxford. It should be like The Monkees. It soon turns into the Addams family. They tear the wallpaper off hauling the Hammond organ in and out. The ashtrays overflow with fag butts. And every time you walk downstairs the carpet comes with you. Worse still, they find stuff that obviously belonged to the previous tenant. Ed finds a half-eaten pork pie. The teeth marks are still visible. Soon only Colin and Thom are left.

They all try and get jobs. Phil already has his publishing thing sorted out. Ed starts working as a barman. Colin signs on at Our Price. Thom just stays at home playing ear-shattering techno music to anyone who will listen. There are few takers.

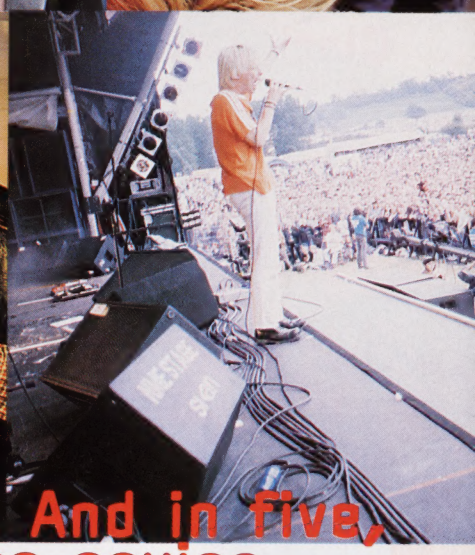
They carry on practising. And gigging. And sending off demos. It's starting to sound good. Those three guitars hammering together like nobody's business. Thom's becoming a good frontman too. Not showy. Just there. Intense. Possessed. *There.*

It's mid-'91. One day the band get a call from Chris Hufford and Bryce Edge. Formerly members of new romantic never-quite-weres Aeriel FX, the pair have set up a management company and are looking for a band to cut their teeth on. They think Radiohead could be it. The band agree to let them have a go and, within months, a feeding frenzy starts among the record companies. In the end the band agree to sign with Parlophone at the end of 1991. Colin and Jonny's mum refuses to tell their grandad on the grounds that the shock would kill him. On the day they actually sign on the dotted line Radiohead travel down to London. Someone suggests that they go out for a drink afterwards. The band decline.

The band hit the road in earnest. They support everyone who's no one. Kingmaker. The Sultans Of Ping. Spiritualized. Doctor And The Medics. In May 1992 they release the 'Drill' EP. It receives little radio play and only charts at 101. But still, these are early days. And it feels good to actually see it in their hands. Their names. Their photograph. Their music.

Anyway, the band have an ace up their sleeve. Incredibly, it came about by accident. Not the actual song. Not the way Thom sings *'You're special/You're so fucking special'*. But those howling arhythmic word-of-God chords that cut in just before the chorus. They were accidental. Christ, Jonny didn't even know the tape was

The changing face of Radiohead 1991-96.



PHOTOS PAT POPE /LFI//AMANDA AGNEW PHOTOGRAPHY

"That song will always be there. And in five, six, ten years time people will be saying that is a classic record." – Thom on 'Crp'**

running. Anyway, the result is phenomenal and they know it. In interviews Tom even says as much. ("That song will always be there. And in five, six, ten years time people will be saying that is a classic record.") This is the one. 'Creep' is it.

'Creep' is released in September '92. It reaches 72 in the charts.

October 1992. It takes about 90 seconds for Jonny Greenwood to go from standing onstage to sitting in the front of the tour bus. As the guitarist clambers into the front seat and picks up his newspaper he can still just about hear the audience clamouring for more. Tonight was a great show. One of the best they've played. Great crowd reaction too. When Thom hit that chorus in 'Vegetable' (*'I'm not a vegetaaable!'*) they went completely bananas.

Then again, this is only The Fleece And Firkin in Bristol. Three hundred people tops. The band has been signed for over a year now and things are moving very slowly. Worse still, the press seems to have turned on them. Apparently Radiohead are a 'corporate' band. And a miserable git corporate band to boot. Jonny gave up his poly course to do this. The others have already got their degrees. But if Radiohead doesn't make it where does that leave him? No, a good gig. But there are still... concerns.

The band record their début album, 'Pablo Honey', in just three weeks. It sounds good. Maybe not perfect. But definitely good. Eventually, the band creep into the Top 40 with 'Anyone Can Play Guitar'. It makes the press think twice about writing them off. But, even so, it all seems so low-key. This definitely *isn't* the way Thom thought it would happen.

Bizarrely, the news that will change the lives of Radiohead comes from Israel. Some DJ starts playing 'Creep'. Then another. Then another. 'Creep' enters the Israeli Top Ten. Radiohead are suddenly very big out there. It seems strange. How can *they* understand while England can't? Anyway, everyone is big somewhere. Jesus, there are probably remote parts of the Andes where Bros are still worshipped like gods.

But then it starts happening everywhere. New Zealand. Scandinavia. Spain. Finally the big one. America. MTV has put the 'Creep' video on heavy rotation and the radio is playing it non-stop. Thom is shown a map which demonstrates the way 'Creep' is sweeping America. It reminds him of the attacking German armies at the start of *Dad's Army*.

The band hit the road. They're ready for this. They've had ten years of practice. No more toilets though. They're now playing halls so big they virtually have their own

THE FIRST RADIOHEAD INTERVIEW

Radiohead's first interview was published in Oxford's *Curfew* fanzine in 1991 and was written and conducted by the magazine's editor Ronan. It's reprinted in the current issue of *Radiohead World Service*, one of the fanmags on the band with permission from the author. At the time Radiohead had yet to change their name from On A Friday, and the lead singer was referred to as Tom. "I'm just aggressive and sick," was his opening gambit.

Even back in '91 On A Friday were being pursued by their first wave of A&R men (three weeks after the interview took place the band had signed to Parlophone) and had a five-track tape recorded with Slowdive producer Chris Hufford which was available from Oxford's Manic Hedgehog record shop (priced £3). It was later to become their début 'Drill' EP under the name of Radiohead.

Thom outlined his philosophy on the music business: "People sometimes say we take things too seriously, but it's the only way you'll get anywhere." Prophetic words indeed.

For the full story *Radiohead World Service* is available either from indie record shops, or from 151 High Road, Trimley-St-Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk IP10 OTW. Please send £2.50 and an A4 SAE.

THOM-TWISTERS

The acerbic tongue of Thom Yorke.

- "We play fuck off music, if you're not interested fuck you." – May '92.
- "The thing I remember most about America is that it's silly. That can be quite a relief at times." – October '93.
- "Being in a band is like when you get chucked by your first girlfriend. You just say to yourself: I'm going to be famous one day, and then she'll regret doing that." – March '95.
- "It's easy to be miserable. Being happy is tougher – and *cooler*." – May '95.
- "For Christ's sake, I did not write 'The Bends' for people to slash their fucking wrists to." – June 1995.
- "Colin could smile while sticking a knife in your stomach. That's a huge compliment, by the way." – July 1995.
- "It's a weird situation to be in – the stadium rock band it's OK to like." – October 1995.

RADIONET

Of course Radiohead are up with technology and already have their own Internet web site. The address is:
http://musicbase.co.uk/music/radiohead/
It's run in conjunction with the band's record label Parlophone and includes up-to-date details of new releases, UK tour information, details of new merchandise and how to obtain a Radiohead screen saver. It also has pages of contributions from fans which include discographies and the correct chord structures for Radiohead songs!

TEN 'OUT THERE' LYRICS

1. *'We scratch our eternal itch/Our 20th century bitch/And we are grateful for our iron lung.'* – 'My Iron Lung'
2. *'Your eyes are on my wall, your teeth are over there.'* – 'Thinking About You'
3. *'I'm just lying in a bar with my drip feed on/Talking to my girlfriend.'* – 'The Bends'
4. *'Ohhh mistreated a low/corporate/hummmmmmistreated a low/corporate hum.'* – 'Lewis (Mistreated)'
5. *And the buildings say we spit on your face some more.'* – 'Stop Whispering'
6. *'Kill me Sarah, kill me again with love/It's going to be a glorious day.'* – 'Lucky'
7. *'She lives with a broken man, a cracked polystyrene man who just crumbles and burns.'* - 'Fake Plastic Trees'
8. *'A beautiful girl a beautiful girl can turn your world into/DUST.'* – 'Punchdrunk Lovesick Singalong'
9. *'Now I can't climb the stairs/Pieces missing everywhere/Prozac painkillers.'* – 'Bones'
10. *'And soon he'll get to you/Teach you/How to get to purest hell.'* – 'Banana Co'

RADIOHEAD WOULDN'T EXIST WITHOUT...

...all kinds of weird books and films influencing their music. Here's the individual breakdown of Radiohead's cultural stimulation.

Thom:
The Vanished Road by Ben Okri.
Vert by Jeff Noon.
Any post-modernist non-fiction.
Night On Earth directed by Jim Jarmusch.
Les Amants Du Pont-Neuf directed by Leos Carax.
Arthur directed by Steve Gordon, for lazy Sunday afternoon viewing.

Phil:
Becoming A Man by Paul Monet.
Waterland by Graham Swift.
Breakfast At Tiffany's directed by Blake Edwards.
Shenandoah directed by Andrew V. McLaglen.

Colin:
Historical non-fiction, particularly on the Ancient Greeks.
The Guardian.
Wings Of Desire directed by Wim Wenders.

Jonny:
Generation X by Douglas Coupland.
The Liar by Stephen Fry.
Distant Voices by John Pilger.
Prick Up Your Ears directed by Stephen Frears.
Reservoir Dogs directed by Quentin Tarantino.

Ed:
The Passion by Jeanette Winterton.
Slouching Towards Bethlehem by Joan Dideon.
Manhattan Murder Mystery directed by Woody Allen.
Apocalypse Now directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

OBSCURE RADIOHEAD FANZINES

Apart from *Radiohead World Service*, there are three other Radiohead fanzines around. The satirical *Lewis* is available from 47 The Moorings, Penville Way, Burnley, Lancs BB12 OTP. It costs £1.50 (send an A4 SAE). The Radiohead-approved *Pop Is Dead* is available from Val Savage, 26 Arundel Court, Beadham Drive, Manchester M9 OGY, price £1 plus an A5 SAE. The other notable 'zine is from Japan: *Drill* is available from Tomoko Kurokawa, 8-8-58 Hisagi, Kanagawa 249, Japan. Send an International Return Coupon for prices. No issue has yet surfaced in this country, but another 'zine is underway in Canada. Send an IRC for prices to Kathleen Smith, 432 Rouge Hill Road, Scarborough, Ontario, M1C 2Z7, Canada. There's also The Radiohead Information Service, PO Box 322, Oxford OX4 1EY. An official fanzine, *Answerphone*, is available from this address.

RADIOHEAD RARITIES

Radiohead are not the most collectable of bands, owing to the fact that they signed straight to a major without having any preliminary indie releases. However, fans might like to try and trace the following:

● The five-track cassette mentioned in the first ever Radiohead interview is the most elusive item of the lot, particularly as it came out under the name On A Friday and was only available from Manic Hedgehog.

● The first two Parlophone releases as Radiohead have been deleted. Their début, 'The Drill EP', had a limited run of only 3,000 copies and the second – the first pressing of 'Creep' – had a run of just 6,000 (future nest-eggs for collectors!).

● Foreign promos are also worth checking out. The 'Just (For College)' four-track EP that went out to college radio stations in the States features a live version of 'Just' and three b-sides from UK singles. French copies of 'Pablo Honey' and 'The Bends' come complete with four-track live CDs attached to them, while Japanese versions of 'Pablo Honey' have five extra tracks and 'The Bends' has two. The US 'Pablo Honey' has the radio edit of 'Creep' as a 'secret track'. There's a Japan-only release, 'Itch', which is a 'Tour Souvenir' eight-track CD of b-sides that had only previously been available in the UK.

● The magazine *Record Collector* is planning a full discography of Radiohead in the near future. It's also useful for the lists it runs which catalogue American promos. In *Record Collector* you can also find out about record fairs and the best place to seek out rarities.

gravitational pull. They play the *Arsenio Hall Show* which they're told is a really big deal. They turn up at K-ROQ radio station in Los Angeles and answer people's phone-in sex queries. Back in England 'Creep' is re-released. Suddenly, all those papers that had written them off as major label no-marks suddenly want interviews. Thom attempts to choke back his disgust. Sometimes he even succeeds.

Radiohead return to the States. And Canada. And everywhere. Things start to get surreal. 'Pablo Honey' ships half a million copies in America. Thom does an advert for jeans. When German journalists ask Colin and Thom whether they ever write anything together the pair start babbling about an imaginary composition entitled 'Your Wind In My Hair'. The journalists solemnly write it all down. The band are presented with gold discs in New York. They're then taken away and re-presented in Los Angeles.

No one really knows when they start to lose it. But lose it they do. Somewhere along the line it all becomes too much. Receptionists ask Thom, "Are you that 'Creep' guy?" The band start getting weird mail. One is from a convicted murderer who says he identifies with Thom. He writes back to people saying he's not a counsellor. Still the mail pours in. In the autumn of '93 they are forced to cancel an appearance at the Reading Festival due to a problem with Thom's voice. A Harley Street specialist says that his neck feels like concrete. And still the gigs roll on.

In an attempt to alleviate the boredom they start to video everything. The people they meet. Themselves. Anything. Sometimes Thom is so pissed that he just ends up pointing the camera at the carpet. There are still high points - some American gigs with Belly, meeting R.E.M.'s Mike Mills famous Abbey Road to complete work. They've chosen John Leckie as their producer because he's the guy who made Magazine's 'Real Life'. Leckie is one of the best but, having just come from watching The Stone Roses piss about for three years, he's in no hurry to nursemaid another band through that difficult second album. Things don't go well. The songs just aren't there. One of them sounds just like Guns N' Roses for God's sake. To make matters worse Thom becomes convinced that the rest of the band aren't trying. Eventually, the sessions are abandoned after Leckie tells them to do what they hell they like. But stop doing this.

By this stage things have gotten so bad that even Hufford and Edge are worried enough to start looking around for another band to manage. They find one called Supergrass. And all the time the pressure is mounting. From the record company. From the fans. The message is clear. Go on. You can do it. Give us another one. Give us another 'Creep'.

September 1994. Ed O'Brien is in his parents' living room flipping through the band's library of home-made videos. An immensely amenable character, the guitarist dishes out cups of tea while giving a running commentary on the tapes. They turn out to be a pretty mixed bag. The stuff from a year ago shows a bunch of people who look like they'd rather hammer nails in their own eyes than crack a smile. The more recent footage, though, is cheerier. There's Thom and Jonny getting steamed in a Japanese sake bar. And there's Colin shoving a Cornetto into his face at Bali airport. And there's Ed... um... staggering around in his hotel room ("I was very pissed. I think I may have been trying to simulate the Can-Can in front of some mirrors.").

"I was fed up with being blond. Maybe Tango would be interested in me being slapped around the face by some big blob." - Thom Yorke

and Bill Berry when they play the 40 Watt club in Athens, Georgia – but things just begin to fall apart. Even the constant demands from German journalists to hear 'Your Wind In My Hair' aren't funny anymore and soon the band disappear off into their own little worlds and enter what Thom describes as "complete fucking meltdown". Jonny listens to talking books incessantly. Colin begins hanging out with the roadcrew. And Thom just stops communicating. Wondering how it came to this. They were friends, after all. Mates. And now all he wants to do is shut it all down. Pack his bags and get the hell out of there.

At last it's over and the band return to England. Which is when things start getting *really* bad. For their second album the band will record in London at RAK Studios and eventually move to the

After a couple of hours Ed's dad returns from work and the guitarist scurries around tidying up. Suddenly, he wheels around. "This may sound a bit strange," he says piling up the video tapes behind the TV. "But don't get him talking about music." Fine, you think. Two hours of Max Bygraves reminiscences you can do without. Mr O'Brien Snr turns out to be as friendly as his offspring. A highly-regarded osteopath, he is clearly chuffed with the band's success and really seems to know his stuff. Actually, it turns out he really, *really* knows his stuff.

"Who's that?" Ed's dad demands, peering at the TV set which is now showing a video of two women leaning against an enormous silver-grey tour bus. It was shot in October of 1993. Umm... Tanya Donnelly and Gail Greenwood They're in a band called Belly. Ed buries his head in his hands.

WEIRD VIDEOS EXPLAINED

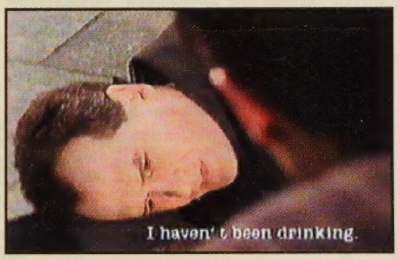
With the success of 'The Bends' also came some bafflingly barmy Radiohead promo vids. Here's what lies behind them.

THE SONG: 'HIGH AND DRY'
THE LOCATION: VASQUEZ ROCKS, CALIFORNIA
THE DIRECTOR: DAVID MOULD

What happens: Radiohead play out in the desert in front of a water tanker. The picture resembles a radar screen on an aircraft. As the song plays it starts to rain heavily.
The idea: "We wanted to put the band somewhere a bit alien. It's a very sensitive song so we tried a create something a bit hard that would contrast with the mood of the music. The targets were intended to make it look like it was beamed down from space to mission control." – David Mould.
The inside story: "We went to Los Angeles because we were hoping for really beautiful sunshine but when we got there they were in the middle of the biggest storms for 40 years and ended up not being able to film for three days. Nobody had warned us."
The unnecessary humiliation: "When we turned on the rain machine we didn't realise you could warm up the water beforehand so the whole band ended up being doused in ice cold water and getting flu. Colin was shaking so much I thought he was going to keel over."
The director on Radiohead: "They were really cool and just got on with it, despite us covering them in freezing cold water for three hours."

THE SONG: 'FAKE PLASTIC TREES'
THE LOCATION: AN AIRCRAFT HANGAR, LOS ANGELES
THE DIRECTOR: JAKE SCOTT

What happens? Thom sits in a shopping trolley being pushed around a supermarket where goods are stacked according to their colour. Various bizarre images pass by – old men with pistols, babies being carried around and shop assistants using pricing machines as tools of violence. Finally, as Thom reaches the end of the song he finds the exit and leaves.
The idea: "The film is actually an allegory for death and reincarnation but if you can read that into it you must be as weird as the people who made it." – Jake Scott
The inside story: "When Thom reaches the exit he looks back and sees a little boy. That boy is meant to represent Thom's reincarnation after the death of leaving the supermarket."
Was it easy to get Thom to sit in the shopping trolley? "Yeah, he'll try anything. He actually said he was fascinated by watching himself in close-up because he'd never really observed his strange eye in such detail before."
The director on Radiohead: "They're bright guys so they don't need all the ideas explaining to them. They're a very open-minded kind of group."



THE SONG: 'JUST'
THE DIRECTOR: JAMIE THRAVES
THE LOCATION: NEAR LIVERPOOL STREET STATION, LONDON

What happens: A man inexplicably lies down in the street. A crowd gathers to try to help him get up but when he refuses they demand to know what's wrong with him. Meanwhile Radiohead play 'Just' in a nearby flat. Eventually the man reluctantly agrees to tell them why he's lying down. The subtitles cut out so we only see him mouthing the words. When they hear his reason they all lie down as well.
The idea: "I'd already written a story along the lines of the video and when I was sent the track it seemed to fit perfectly with what I had already dreamed up." – Jamie Thraves.
The inside story: "We weren't originally going to have the band in the video very much but when we filmed them in the bedroom Thom's performance of the song was so wonderful to watch we had to include it."
What does that bloke say at the end? "I can't tell you. To actually tell you the reason he's lying down would deaden the impact. And it'd make you lie down in the street as well."
The director on Radiohead: "They're very sweet people. Very gentle."

THE SONG: 'STREET SPIRIT (FADE OUT)'
THE LOCATION: A STRETCH OF DESERT JUST OUTSIDE LOS ANGELES
THE DIRECTOR: JONATHAN GLAZER

What happens: Thom stands singing with his eyes closed while random images flash past, some of them in slow motion. Barking dogs, small boys, locusts, paint and smashed glass all feature heavily. Meanwhile the rest of the band fall off chairs and jump around, also in slow motion.
The idea: "We wanted to make something really elegant and beautiful. I wanted something that would create space in the viewer's imagination to complement the stream of consciousness of the song." – Thom.
The inside story: "Thom wanted it to be like a dream and liked the idea of nobody really getting anywhere."– Jonathan Glazer
The mad stunt: Thom jumps backwards off the trailer and appears to land an inch above the ground. "He had three or four Jack Daniels beforehand but it was still pretty brave of him to do it himself. We had a mattress which he fell onto and that had to be edited out of the final version by computer." – Jonathan Glazer
The director on Radiohead: "They have a very clear idea of who they are and what they want. They're always aiming to make a statement."

"Ah yes... Tanya. I do think the Throwing Muses are better off without her. Have you heard Kristen Hersh's acoustic album? It's absolutely fantastic..."

Ironically, what saves Radiohead is another tour. That desire not to let a decade of blood, sweat and friendship just disappear down the toilet. In fact, they had tried to sort things out at the end of '93. It was the first date of a European jaunt with James. Things were bad. Very bad. An emergency band meeting was called right after the band hit Hamburg. Drink was consumed. Souls bared. But it didn't change anything. The recording sessions proved that.

In the spring of '94 they head off to play a few dates in Mexico. The band have hit a total low and this is the last thing they need. Careering around shitty Central American roads. Playing to people who, if they've heard of them at all, only know the song that is rapidly becoming the *other* C-word. They are, in short, people with absolutely nothing to lose. And it feels strangely good. The shows go well. More importantly, the band start talking again. Kidding around. Slowly remembering quite why they got into this stupid, corrupt kiss-ass business in the first place.

By the time they return to England everything is just about alright again. It's the songs that clinch it. Songs like the tortured anti-beauty lament 'High And Dry'. Or 'Black Star'. Or 'Bones'. They work quickly too. 'My Iron Lung' is recorded at a soundcheck at The Astoria. The pounding, almost Zeppelin-esque 'Planet Xerox' comes together after a drunken restaurant

COVER DISSECTION!

Sleeve artist and Thom's mate Dan Rickwood is the mind behind the distinctive Radiohead 'Bends'-period sleeves. Here he tells us where the kiss-of-life, the Gulf War and Brazilian soap operas fit in to the band's distorted vision...

THE ALBUM: 'THE BENDS'

"Thom and I only had three days left to do a cover and we just had a pile of images that were no good. We tried to find an iron lung at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford but we ended up in the room where all the medical students practise resuscitation – that face is the head of the man they try out the kiss-of-life on. Even though he was made of plastic he had this expression which was somewhere between agony and ecstasy which was just right for the record."

"That's some people walking down a street in New Zealand. But it's been heavily distorted so you'd hardly know. It's another urban scene. Radiohead are always interested in anything where technology interacts with human beings."

"That's Japanese car salesman at work. Thom and I distorted it really heavily but you can still see the figures on the left. Thom's really fascinated by Japan because it's such a technological society."

"Those are both from a Japanese weather programme that Thom videoed."

"That's the band in an airport departure lounge. They spend so long in those places that they were going to have a shot like that for the cover but none really stood out. You can just about make out Thom's head at the far end."

"Thom had this video of the triumphant return of soldiers after the Gulf War and there was this guy in it dressed as Captain America – but he had this huge paunch which just looked ridiculous. So we cropped out the stomach and blew it up. It was like a vague comment on patriotism."

"Those are the three colours that we also used on the T-shirts for 'The Bends'."

"All the drawings are taken from Thom's notebook. He's always scribbling stuff down when he's on tour – some of it ends up as songs and some of it just stays as doodles. I've no idea what they all mean. The words are usually quotes from books or just phrases that Thom likes the sound of. I just look through his book and pick them out."

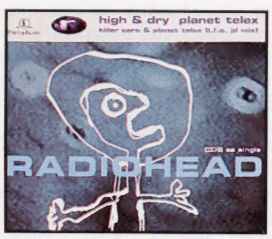
"That's a film of somebody being treated with those electric plates *(defibrillators – smart-arse Ed)* that they use to try and get your heart started again."

"That's an icon of the old revolving world the BBC used to use before programmes came on. It's become a sort of Radiohead trademark – we use it on all the sleeves."

THE SINGLES

'MY IRON LUNG'

● "This is taken from a video Thom took of a load of Japanese businessmen who apparently got out of their cars and just started walking around in a circle. It reminded him of *Reservoir Dogs*. "
● "The two weather symbols are from that Japanese news programme again."



'HIGH AND DRY'

● "That's a close up of the chest of the same dummy we used for 'The Bends'."
● "The diver is in there because the bends is a condition which affects divers when they come out of the water."

'FAKE PLASTIC TREES'

● "That's a woman from a Brazilian soap opera. Her eyes are blacked out like they do when you're not supposed to know who somebody is, but in Brazil everybody watches the programme so would be able to tell anyway. I think Thom liked the idea of fame mixed with anonymity."

'JUST'

● "That was all shot where I used to live in Plymouth. I just hung around the back streets with a video camera.."
● "The hands and the locks *(also used on the 'Street Spirit' single)* show the connection between things locked together out of choice and things locked together because they just can't separate. It's a comment on relationships."
● "The lettering is taken from number plates, fire hydrants, street signs and anything else I could find. It roughly joins together to spell Radiohead."

'STREET SPIRIT'

● "Thom brought the escalator image back from Japan. Again, the idea was to get across the spirit of living in late 20th century technological society."
● *('Immerse')* "That's a line from near the end of the song. Thom had it scribbled down in his notebook so we just took it and translated it straight onto the sleeve."
● *(World logo)* "That's the same one that's on 'The Bends'."
● "That's Michael Caine's cat in *The Italian Job*. It's one of Thom's favourite films."

outing (Thom will later admit that the lyrics are "total gibberish".). It feels good. By the time 'My Iron Lung' is refused A-listing by Radio One in September of '94 on the grounds of raucousness they can even see the funny side. What do they have to do to get playlisted? Record a charity record?

In March 1995 Radiohead finally release their second album, 'The Bends'. An instant, joyous classic of scorched earth angst and wall-of-guitar attack, the record receives almost unanimously good reviews. The second single, a double A of 'High And Dry' and 'Planet Telex' (renamed after a quick chat with Xerox lawyers) even features some dance re-mixes a good ten years after Thom first started banging on about BPMs. OK, so there's the odd jibe about Radiohead becoming the next U2 – great. Either they're "all over" or they're "too big", but Thom takes it in his stride and starts muttering about his accountants urging a move to Dublin.

Once again the band head out on a world tour. The venues in America may be smaller but the crowds seem to be getting into the new stuff and at least they're not at each other's throats anymore.The band start having fun with interviewers again. Colin starts telling people how he intends to set up a fellowship of rock'n'roll at Peterhouse with an entrance exam that would include sections on joint-rolling and how to deal with groupies.

Things start getting fun during the summer when the band start supporting R.E.M.. Radiohead are *big* R.E.M. fans. At first things are weird though. After all, what are you supposed to say to Michael Stipe? Soon everyone chills out. After the second date in Berlin both bands gets plastered at a record company party surrounded by inflatable dinosaurs. The next day Mike Mills shows Thom a letter that Bill Clinton has sent him sympathising over the bass-player's recent stomach troubles. Bizarre. By the time they start on the American leg Radiohead have started to teach R.E.M. the basics of cricket.

Even the bad things seem alright. The new single 'Fake Plastic Trees' is derided as 'angst rock' in the movie *Clueless*. But it's then played incessantly on the soundtrack (but not on Radio One). They tour with Soul Asylum who turn out to be nice guys even though their music sucks. At a gig in Canada they have all their equipment nicked. Two years ago this would have just about finished them off but now it's just a blip. In fact Thom rather enjoys it. For one day everyone feels so sorry for them and everything is free.

On September 4 they record 'Lucky' for The Bosnia-aid 'Help' album. Even given the do-it-in-a-day time restrictions it's relatively easy. Everyone feels very emotional. By the time Jonny overdubs a choir sample on the verse Thom has turned into a gibbering wreck. A month later 'Lucky' is chosen as a lead track on the Help project's first EP. It's generally acknowledged as the finest thing on the album. It's not playlisted by Radio One.

Eventually, of course, we do reach the party. And there is alcohol. And there is music. And there is Roger Taylor from Queen. As you wander around the weirdly dub-tastic bar it's difficult not to conclude that just about every cliché about Radiohead is both true and hopelessly off the mark. Yes, they're the band that did 'Creep' But they're also the band that did 'The Bends'. Sure, they can be miserable, truculent sons-of-bitches. But they can also be – far more frequently – some of the politest, drollest people you could ever meet. And OK, their reputation for turning their backs on wanton behaviour may have more than a grain of truth to it. But, given half a chance, they're more than capable of transforming into blurry-eyed beer monsters with serious love-you-like-a-brother inclinations.

Tonight, for example, is definitely a blurry-eyed beer monster night. Even Thom is in high spirits and takes all ribbings about his freshly coppered barnet like a trooper ("I was just fed up with being blond. Maybe Tango would be interested in me being slapped around the face by some big blob."). Predictably, after a brief rant by 'Cocktail King' Ed about how Delia Smith's promotion of the humble cranberry is making the ingredients of his favourite cocktails impossible to find, talk turns to the band. In particular the future. After all, they've been 'That Band With The Great Single' and 'That Band With The Great Album'. What next?

"The thinking at the moment is that the next record is going to be very up," explains Colin. "Just go in and do it. We just seem to be on a roll. I mean, we were only going to perform 'Nobody Does It Better' once on MTV. But we liked doing it so much that we've carried on. Mmm... Maybe an album of Bond themes wouldn't be such a bad idea."

"Samplers!" Thom suddenly announces as a smirk ripples across his face. "That's the next thing we're getting. Never mind video cameras and powerbooks. Samplers are the future. Now all I've got to do now is convince everyone else..."

Radiohead are ecstatic about their major success.

PHOTO PAT POPE

"The next record is going to be very up. Just go in and do it." – Colin Greenwood